

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ASMARA 00122 111432Z

44

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-05 IO-11 SY-05 OPR-02 SCCT-01 /089 W

----- 027895

P 111325Z FEB 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3821

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON PRIORITY

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

NAVCOMMSTA N MAKRI PRIORITY

CNO WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0122

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: THE INSURGENCY

PAGE 2 RUFTEFA5122 C O N F I D E N T I A L

REF: A. NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA 101140Z FEB 76

B. ASMARA 0077 (DTG 291145Z JAN 76)

C. ASMARA 0065 (DTG 261335Z FEB 76)

D. ASMARA 0012 (DTG 051030Z JAN 76)

1. AS FIRST UPDATE ON MILITARY SITUATION IN ERITREA ANALYZED AT
THE BEGINNING OF JANUARY (REF D), THIS IS TO REPORT THAT SO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ASMARA 00122 111432Z

FAR THIS YEAR ASMARA ITSELF HAS REMAINED VERY QUIET. THIS

MAY WELL BE A CONSEQUENCE OF WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A
SUBSTANTIAL EPMG MILITARY SUCCESS AT THE END OF JANUARY (REF B)
ON THE KEREN ROAD.

2. ACCORDING TO VARIETY OF INFORMANTS, INCLUDING THE ACTING
COMMANDER OF THE 2ND DIVISION, COL. TELAHUN SAHLE, WHO WAS
INDUCED BY THE OIC NAVCOMMUNIT TO DISCUSS THE ACTION, THE
EPMG FORCES SEEM TO HAVE FINALLY GOTTEN IT TOGETHER AND
SCORED HEAVILY AGAINST THE INSURGENTS. ACCORNG TO
TELAHUN, ARMY HQS BECAME AWARE THROUGH LOCAL INFORMANTS
OF A PLANNED AMBUSH ON THE KEREN ROAD AND PROCEEDED TO TAKE

PAGE 3 RUFTEFA5122 C O N F I D E N T I A L

ADVANTAGE OF THE INFORMATION BY SPRINGING THEIR OWN
COUNTERAMBUSH. WHILE A MOTOR CONVOY PROCEEDED ALONG THE
ROAD TO THE SPOT WHERE ACTION WAS EXPECTED, THE COUNTERFORCE,
UTILIZING APCS, HURRIED TO THE SCENE BY ALTERNATE ROUTES AND
SUCCEDEDIN ENVELOPING THE ASSEMBLED INSURGENT FORCES.
ACCORDING TO TELAHUN, ALL INSURGENTS WEREITHER KILLED OR
CAPTURED. WHILE HE DID NOT SPECIFY NUMBERS, FROM OTHER
SOURCES WE ESTIMATE INSURGENT LOSSESS AS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN
200-300. NO AIRCRAFT WERE USED; IN FACT, TO AVOID ALERTING
THE INSURGENTS, AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE WAS DISCOUNTED DURING
THE PERIOD IN QUESTION. THE ENGAGEMENT EVIENTLY WENT ON
FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

3. OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST WAS TELAHUN'S OBSERVATION THAT
THE EPMG FORCES ARE EVIDENTLY SUCCEEDING INCREASINGLY IN
GETTING INTELLIGENCE FROM WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS "LOCAL
SHIFTAS" WITH WHOM SOME ACCOMMODATION APPEARS POSSIBLE, AS
CONTRASTED TO THE "ARMED BANDITS" WHO REPRESENT THE REAL
MENACE. BY "SHIFTAS" WE FEEL TELAHUN MEANS THE ELF AND BY
"BANDITS", THE PLF WHICH BY NOW IS THE MORE HEAVILY ARMED

PAGE 4 RUFTEFA5122 C O N F I D E N T I A L

AND WHICH ENJOYS GREAR FOREIGN SUPPORT. IN DISCUSSING THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ASMARA 00122 111432Z

MILITARY'S APPARENTLY ENHANCED ABILITY TO GAIN LOCAL
INTELLIGENCE, TELAHUN ALSO EMPHASIZED THE INCREASING ATTENTION
THE MILITARY IS GIVING TO ATTEMPTS AT PACIFYING THE COUNTRYSIDE
AND TRYING TO DISPEL THE ILL-WILL GENERATED BY EARLIER MILITARY
EXCESSES. FOR THIS REASON HE INDICATED CONCERN AT THE
JUBILANT FIRING OF WEAPONS BY RETURNING EPMG WARRIORS ON THE
EVENING OF JANUARY 28 (REF B), WHICH IS THE VERY SORT OF
DISPLAY THAT IS MISUNDERSTOOD BY AND FRIGHTENS THE GENERAL

POPULACE.

4. FROM BOTH OUR OWN OBSERVATION AND FROM NAY LOCAL SOURCES, WE ARE SATISFIED THAT THE UTILIZATION AS GARRISON TROOPS IN ASMARA OF RECALLED VETERANS HAS NOT ONLY PERMITTED A GREATER CONCENTRATION OF YOUNGER TRAINED TROOPS IN THE FIELD BUT HAS HAD DEFINITE PACIFYING EFFECT. THESE VETERANS ARE FAR LESS PRONE TO VIOLENCE A ACTUALLY MAKE AN EFFORT TO BE FRIENDLY WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION. THEY ARE OLDER MEN, MANY OF THEM WITH CHILDREN OF THEIR OWN, AND THEY CAN FREQUENTLY BE SEEN PLAYING WITH ERITREAN CHILDREN. ANOTHER

PAGE 5 RUFTEFA5122 C O N F I D E N T I A L

EXAMPLE IS THE OBVIOUS GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE SOLDIERS OF THIS TYPE NOW STATIONED IN THE CONGEN COMPOUND AND OUR LOCAL ARMED GUARDS. THIS CHANGE SHOULD NOT BE OVEREMPHASIZED, BUT IT IS A FAR CRY FROM THE ARROGANCE AND BRUTALITY OF THE OCCUPYING TROOPS LAST YEAR.

5. WHATEVER THEIR REASONS FOR LEAVING ASMARA IN PEACE SO FAR THIS YEAR, THE INSURGENTS HAVE BEEN ACTIVE ELSEWHERE. THEY REPORTEDLY SCORED THEIR OWN SMALLER SUCCESS IN AN ENGAGEMENT NORTHEAST OF MASSAWA LAST WEEK WHICH RESUED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF A SMALL VILLAGE IN THE AREA AS RETALIATION BY EPMG TROOPS. IN ADDITION, EPMG TROOPS HAVE REPORTEDLY KILLED ABOUT 60 INHABITANTS OF A SMALL VILLAGE FOUR KMS WEST OF MASSAWA. TRUCK CONVOYS BETWEEN MASSAWA AND ASMARA HAVE NOT BEEN INTERRUPTED, BUT THE INSURGENTS AGAIN CUT THE POWER DISTRIBUTION LINES FROM MASSAWA SO THAT NO POWER FROM MASSAWA IS NOW REACHING ASMARA. THE CITY IS, NEVERTHELESS, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ASMARA 00122 111432Z

RECEIVING ADEQUATE POWER FROM THE TWO OPERATIONAL UNITS AT THE BELEZA POWER PLANT JUST OUTSIDE OF ASMARA AND THE

PAGE 6 RUFTEFA5122 C O N F I D E N T I A L

FULL-TIME USE OF ONE SEDAO GENERATOR AT KAGNEW (REF A).

6. NOTWITHSTANDING THE ABOVE DESCRIBED SETBACK FOR THE INSURGENTS, WE MUST ASSUME THAT FOR REASONS OF PRESTIGE AND PUBLICITY AT THE VERY LEAST THEY WILL CONTINUE TO LAUNCH HIT-AND-RUN ATTACKS ON ASMARA. THEY RETAIN THE ABILITY THEY HAVE ALWAYS HAD TO DO THIS AND, AMONG OTHERS, COL. TELAHUN FEARS THEY MAY CONTINUE TO DO JUST THAT. HE IS CONCERNED THAT SUCH ATTACKS MIGHT WELL HAVE THE EFFECT OF

GENERATING, AS THEY HAVE IN THE PAST, EXCESSIVE REACTIONS FROM THE EPMG TROOPS AND COULD LEAD AGAIN TO TERY TYPE OF RETALIATION WHICH PROVOKED SO MUCH FEAR AND HATRED ON THE PART OF THE LOCAL POPULATION LAST YEAR. THE INSURGENTS CAN ALSO BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THEIR AMBUSH TACTICS ON THE ROADS OUTSIDE THE MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS, SOME OF WHICH ARE BOUND TO BE SUCCESSFUL, ALTHOUGH BTHEY MIGHT NOW BE SOMEWHAT MORE PRUDENT AFTER THEIR RECENT EXPERIENCE. BY THE SAME TOKEN IT APPEARS THAT EPMG FORCES ARE ONCE AGAIN MOVING INTO AN AGGRESSICE PHASE, AND WITH THE REINFORCEMENTS THEY HAVE RECEIVED AND ON THE BASIS OF THE EXPERIENCE THEY

PAGE 7 RUFTEFA5122 C O N F I D E N T I A L

HAVE GAINED TO DATE, MAY WELL PROVE TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN THEY HAVE IN THE LAST.

SHERRY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, POLITICAL SUMMARIES, SELFDETERMINATION, ASMARA
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ASMARA00122
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760051-1053
From: ASMARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760261/aaaacbpl.tel
Line Count: 187
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 JAN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 JAN 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE INSURGENCY PAGE 2 RUFTEFA5122 C O N F I D E N T I A L
TAGS: PINS, ET
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006